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TAGS: [ASEC](#) [AMGT](#) [ABLD](#) [UN](#) [SU](#)
SUBJECT: DARFUR PLATFORM: A 90-DAY PLAN

REFS: A) KHARTOUM 1660; B) 1/16/09 LAMB-LISENBEE TELCON

¶1. This is an Action Request. See Paragraph 11.

¶2. Summary: The purpose of this cable is to outline Post's 90-day plan for enhancing the USG's ability to pursue essential policy and program objectives in Darfur (See also reftel A). Creating a secure platform for USG operations in Darfur is imperative to allow effective oversight of USG-funded humanitarian operations in Darfur, on-the-ground political information gathering, and enhanced access to the UN peacekeeping mission in Darfur. End summary.

Background

¶3. During January 10-12, a USG team traveled to Nyala and El Fasher, Darfur. The team consisted of RSO Chuck Lisenbee, USAID's Chief of Overseas Management Services Beth Salamanca, USAID Sudan Construction Manager Bill Cherry, and USAID/OFDA Sudan Country Representative Sureka Khandagle. The primary purpose of this visit was to develop a plan that would immediately move forward the development/construction of a USG Darfur platform. The team assessed current USAID and Embassy facilities, identified an interim facility in El Fasher for further review and development, and identified land in El Fasher suitable for a more robust, long-term platform. Following this assessment, the country team received a briefing on next steps.

¶4. On January 14, the USAID Mission Director, OFDA Country Representative and USAID EXO met with the DCM, RSO and Management Officer to develop a 90-day plan for moving the Darfur platform forward. The immediate objective of the 90-day plan is to allow (a) consistent oversight and management of USAID's \$500 million dollar humanitarian program in Darfur; (b) project USG policy and political influence into this conflict zone that threatens regional stability; and (c) establish a more secure base of operations for further platform development.

¶5. Following are the next steps the team identified:

Next Steps (El Fasher)

¶A. Secure an additional Khartoum ARSO position to assist with RSO/ARSO coverage for Darfur.

¶B. Secure a lease with the Agriculture Research Center (ARC) for an existing 12-person residential compound (soon to be vacated by PAE) identified for interim, TDY accommodations that would co-locate all USG personnel lodging in close proximity to the airport and UNAMID HDQs. The leases on the "green" and "blue" houses do not expire until the end of the year, and as such, would be maintained for FSN and TDY office space and outside meetings to allow separation of residential and office functions. Moreover, the lease for the PAE residential compound is not yet assured.

¶C. Secure land on ARC property for a secure, longer-term, multi-agency complex with on-compound housing.

¶D. Hire and deploy a Darfur Platform Construction Manager or Project Manager.

¶E. Begin making upgrades or improvements to the proposed interim residential compound and negotiate with PAE to leave behind the security apparatus already in place. This space is ideal because it was initially constructed by USAID in the early 1980's, and has been enhanced by PAE, which has occupied it for the past three years. Located adjacent to the proposed land for construction of longer-term facilities, the interim building's proximity will afford better management oversight by the project and/or construction

manager.

¶F. Identify a contractor to undertake the longer-term construction project.

¶G. Place an order for modular office and residential units that have been certified by DS/PSP as meeting OSPB standards.

¶6. The Chief of Mission and Country Team are agreed on the sequence above, and USAID has the resources and authorities to undertake steps B-G immediately. The Mission appreciates DS's consideration of additional RSO support, (per reftel B.) COM noted, however, that upcoming international and bilateral events, such as the fallout from an ICC arrest warrant against President Bashir, could delay or derail this plan.

¶7. Next Steps (Nyala)

¶A. Identify land for long term co-location facility.

¶B. Make upgrades to the existing USAID office and residential facilities that are feasible within the constraints of poorly-constructed structures of low-grade material.

The Chief of Mission and Country Team are agreed on the sequence above, and USAID has the resources and authorities to undertake steps A and B immediately.

¶8. The immediate benefits of the 90-day plan are as follows. Due to inadequate security at existing facilities, TDY visits to Darfur have been shortened. This has had a negative impact on the USG's ability to monitor humanitarian programs in Sudan. Similarly, while the Embassy has been able to send political officers to Darfur on short visits several times each month, longer visits enabled by a secure platform will further support our engagement with the UN peacekeeping mission in Darfur and other political actors in the region.

¶9. The current travel policy (short-term intermittent TDYs) has reduced the ability of USAID to fulfill its humanitarian and political objectives in Darfur. A phased return to Darfur based on the execution of key facility improvement benchmarks has been identified as the best approach forward. By concentrating all official Americans in one location in El Fasher, the USG Mission would benefit from shared services, pooling of assets, and reducing the number of compounds that need to be secured to USG standards. The proposed location is also close to UNAMID, which is critical in the event of security incidents in El Fasher.

¶10. Humanitarian Oversight: This 90-day plan would significantly increase USAID's ability to provide consistent monitoring and oversight of DCHA programs in Darfur totaling \$486 million dollars (OFDA - \$100 million, OTI - \$5 million and FFP - \$381 million.) If executed, the 90-day plan will increase the time allowed for USAID staff to be in Darfur to 2-3 week TDYs at significantly more secure facilities that have been improved. It will allow DCHA to monitor programs and liaise with NGO/U.N. staff on a day-to-day basis in the field and increase DCHA's ability to make immediate programmatic changes and adjustments. Increased presence allows for timely and essential information to be collected and used to have a direct impact on our ability to influence policy on humanitarian issues in Sudan. In practice, a lack of presence means less access to real-time and ground-truthed information regarding partner programs, policies, challenges, and security and may negatively impact the USG's ability to execute key aspects of U.S. foreign policy.

¶11. Action: Post requests the Department's and USAID's concurrence to begin implementation of this 90 day Darfur Platform Plan. In addition to favorable consideration by USAID and the Department, we also look forward to presenting this plan to DS/PSP Office Director Gentry Smith during his upcoming visit.

FERNANDEZ